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Operation Desert Storm. Questions Remain on Possible Exposure to Reproductive Toxicants

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Abstract: Since their return from deployment in the Persian Gulf war, many U.S. troops have complained of health problems that they believe result from their service in the gulf region. Research has shown that U.S. troops were exposed before, during, and after the war to a variety of substances that are potentially hazardous. These include occupational hazards (such as the extensive use of diesel fuel as a sand suppressant in and around encampments, the burning of human waste with fuel oil, the presence of fuel in shower water, and the drying of sleeping bags with leaded vehicle exhaust), infectious diseases (most prominently leishmaniasis), prophylactic agents (to protect against chemical and biological weapons), **depleted uranium** (contained in certain ammunition and in the fragments of exploded rounds embedded in casualties), pesticides and insect repellents, possible chemical warfare agents, and a large variety of compounds contained in the extensive smoke from the oil-well fires that enveloped the region at the end of the war. Some veterans of the Persian Gulf war believe that exposure to these elements had harmful effects on not only their own health but also on the health of their spouses and children. There are also concerns about various reproductive problems and about the incidence of birth defects thought to be abnormally high among offspring born to Persian Gulf veterans. This latter subject is the focus of this report.

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